

**KENNEDY**

# Start of Secret War in '61 Described

As early as May 1961, President Kennedy had approved covert actions against Communist forces in Indochina, including the dispatch of agents into the North and infiltration of special South Vietnamese forces into Laos, the Boston Globe said today as it began publishing stories based, it said, on controversial secret Pentagon papers.

The Globe said it was making public for the first time "the roles of the Kennedy administration in the escalation of the war."

In addition, the newspaper said that as President Johnson was deciding in 1968 not to seek a second term, he also was concluding that the U.S. should reduce its troop commitment in a policy similar to what President Nixon would call Vietnamization.

## Cites "Public Interest"

The Globe said some documents from the 1967 Pentagon study were "made available" to it. The paper said it "came by this material and we feel it is in the public interest to publish it."

The New York Times, which first printed material from a 47-volume, \$2.5-million study commissioned by then-Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, and the Washington Post both are continuing to seek court sanction to run further articles from the study.

The Justice Department, which moved against the Times and Post, is investigating to see if the

Globe has secret papers. If so, a spokesman said, the government would move in federal court to block further publication by the Globe.

In addition to Johnson's decision to reduce U.S. troops in South Vietnam the Globe's story today also covered:

## Pretext Offered

- A recommendation to President Kennedy from Gen. Maxwell B. Taylor, then U.S. Ambassador to Saigon, in October, 1961, that 8,000 ground combat troops be sent into Vietnam under pretext of flood control. The Globe said the study said Taylor noted that this might increase world tension and widen the war. Kennedy, however, rejected the recommendation.

- "On June 2, 1964, McNamara in a meeting of top administration officials in Honolulu discussed possible use of nuclear weapons in Vietnam. Adm. Harry D. Felt, commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific, openly advocated that American commanders be given this option."

- A request to the Soviet Union in May, 1965, asking them to inform Hanoi that the United States would temporarily halt bombing North Vietnam as a peace feeler. The Soviets refused, the Globe said, because they felt China would charge collusion with the United States.

## Agents Dispatched

Although Kennedy rejected Gen. Taylor's request for the 8,000-man ground force, the Globe said the study showed that "as early as May 11, 1961," the President had approved programs for covert action which had been recommended by a Vietnam Task Force.

Among these were: Dispatch of agents into North Vietnam; aerial resupply of agents through civilian mercenary air crews; infiltration of special South Vietnam forces into Laos to locate and attack Communist bases; conduct of overflights of North Vietnam for leaflet drops.

On Feb. 14, 1962, President Kennedy discussed Vietnam at a press conference and said that President Ngo Dinh Diem had asked for more assistance. The administration, he said, had detailed the support which the "Viet Minh in the North were giving to this Communist insurgent movement and we have increased our assistance there. And we are supplying logistical assistance, transportation assistance, training, and we have a number of Americans who are taking part in that effort."

The Globe noted that Kennedy did not mention the Taylor recommendation for a U.S. task force or whether the United States was considering one."

"President Kennedy stepped up covert actions against North Vietnam and increased the number of (U.S.) advisers to 16,000 men before he was assassinated . . ." but never committed "a United States ground unit as Taylor recommended."

According to the Globe, the Tet offensive of January, 1968 shook Washington's confidence

in being able to eventually conclude the war and "although it had been predicted, took the U.S. command and the U.S. public by surprise and its strength, length, and intensity prolonged this shock."

At this point, the study says the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended rejection of requests for additional combat troops ease of domestic disorders, were becoming strained.

The Globe quoted the Pentagon analyst as saying:

"The possibility of military victory had seemingly become too high both in political and economic terms. Only then was it realized that a clear-cut military victory was probably not possible or necessary . . ."